

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 3340

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT
SUBJECT: PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL HEALTH OF SAN YU

REF: RANGOON 3184

1. SINCE REFTEL WE HAVE OBTAINED INFORMATION WHICH SHEDS FURTHER LIGHT ON THE PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL HEALTH OF GENERAL SAN YU, TITULAR NUMBER TWO MAN IN THE GOVERNMENT AND BURMA SOCIALIST PROGRAM PARTY (BSPP).

2. A SOURCE WHO IN THE PAST HAS PROVEN QUITE RELIABLE ON MATTERS OF THIS NATURE INFORMED EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY "A PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE EMPLOYED AT DEFENSE SERVICES HOSPITAL NO. 1" (MINGALADON), WHO HAD BEEN CONSULTED IN THE CASE, THAT SAN YU HAD NOT SUFFERED A HEART ATTACK. RATHER, HE HAD SPENT FOUR DAYS DURING THE AUGUST 17-21 PERIOD IN THE DEFENSE SERVICES HOSPITAL NO. 2 (RANGOON) UNDERGOING A COMPLETE "EXAMINATION" IN CONJUNCTION WITH "HIS RETIREMENT" (OTHERWISE UNELABORATED). (COMMENT: SAN YU WENT ON "SUPER-ANNUATION PENSION" FROM THE ARMY ON JULY 16, 1978, HIS 60TH BIRTHDAY. THIS MAY BE WHAT THE DOCTOR REFERRED TO). A RETIRED BURMESE DIPLOMAT TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT ON AUGUST 17 HE OBSERVED SAN YU HAVING HIS TEETH CHECKED AT THE SAME HOSPITAL.

3. ANOTHER MISSION SOURCE RELATED THAT SAN YU, UPON NOTICING SYMPTOMS TO WHICH HE HAD BECOME SENSITIZED ("FIBRILLATION"--
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SAN YU IS REGARDED BY SOME AS A HYPOCHONDRIAC), TURNED HIMSELF IN AT THE HOSPITAL FOR A FULL EXAMINATION.

4. THE FIRST INFORMANT NOTED IN PARA 2 SAID HE HAD ALSO LEARNED FROM PERSONS CLOSE TO NE WIN THAT, PRIOR TO THE PRESIDENT'S DEPARTURE ON HIS PRESENT TRIP TO EUROPE, SAN YU HAD AGAIN SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION FROM HIS GOVERNMENT AND

PARTY POSITIONS--"THIS TIME IN WRITING"--AND THE PRESIDENT DID NOT DECLINE TO ACCEPT IT. (AFTER THE EMBARRASSMENT TO NE WIN RESULTING FROM THE VOTING AT THE THIRD BSPP CONGRESS, FEBRUARY-MARCH 1977, SAN YU REPORTEDLY OFFERED--VOCALLY--TO RESIGN. NE WIN, ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION, REPLIED "NOT NOW".) THE INFORMANT AND HIS SOURCES, THUS, SPECULATE THAT SAN YU'S RESIGNATION MAY BE ANNOUNCED SOON--POSSIBLY AFTER NE WIN'S RETURN FROM EUROPE AND BEFORE THE SESSION OF THE PYITHU HLUTTAW (LEGISLATURE), WHICH BEGINS IN THE LATTER HALF, OF OCTOBER. THEY ALSO SPECULATE THAT PRIME MINISTER MAUNG MAUNG KHA WILL BE NAMED TO ONE OF SAN YU'S POSITIONS.

5. COMMENT: SPECULATION REGARDING SAN YU'S POLITICAL DEMISE IS CHRONIC, BUT--IN VIEW OF THE RECENT SENTENCING OF SEVERAL OF SENIOR BSPP CADRE CONSIDERED TO BE HIS SUPPORTERS AND REPORTS OF RENEWED SCRUTINY OF HIS FAMILY'S BUSINESS AFFAIRS--THERE MAY BE SUBSTANCE TO THIS ROUND. SAN YU, ACCORDING TO OUR BEST INFORMATION, IS NOT ONE OF THE MEN NOW RUNNING BURMA IN NE WIN'S ABSENCE, BUT HE REMAINS AT LEAST TITULAR HEIR APPARENT TO THE THRONE. NE WIN, WHO ONCE REGARDED HIM AS AN UNAMBITIOUS AND SUPPORTIVE TOADY, COULD WELL REGARD HIM AS A VESTIGIAL--PERHAPS, MERELY SYMBOLIC--REMNANT OF A PAST CHALLENGE TO HIS AUTHORITY AND DECIDE TO REMOVE THE ANACHRONISM. BEAN

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